

VZCZCXRO6433
RR RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHJO RUEHMR RUEHRN
DE RUEHSB #0903/01 2771011
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 041011Z OCT 07
FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1973
INFO RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4205
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2220

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 05 HARARE 000903

SIPDIS

DCHA/FFP FOR WELLER, DOSANJH, PETERSEN
DCHA/OFDA FOR KLUU, GGOTTLIEB, AFERRARA,
TDENYSENKO AND CPRATT
AFR/SA FOR LOKEN, DOBBINS, HIRSCH
EGAT FOR HOBGOOD, THOMPSON, HESS, MCGAHUEY, GILL,
RUSHIN-BELL, HURDUS
STATE/AF FOR HILL
STATE/PRM FOR MCKELVEY, LANGE
USUN FOR EMALY
NAIROBI FOR ESTES, DNIRANGO, PUTNAM
PRETORIA FOR DISKIN, HALE, WESSEL
ROME FOR FODAG FOR NEWBERG

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

AIDAC

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [EAID](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: AA/DCHA HESS IMPRESSED BY PROGRAMS, BUT ALARMED BY
SITUATION IN ZIMBABWE

¶1. Summary: USAID Assistant Administrator for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA) Michael Hess, accompanied by Special Assistant Amber Brooks, visited Harare, Bulawayo, and rural areas September 16-20 to assess humanitarian needs and programs and to consult with civil society organizations on the political and economic future of Zimbabwe. Hess met with various groups, from civil society to homeless victims of Operation Murambatsvina, to USAID staff, emphasizing the linkages between democracy, conflict, and humanitarian assistance. Explaining that poor governance - not drought or crop failure - causes famine and economic crisis in a country, AA Hess argued that USAID's democracy and governance (DG) programs were essential components for transitioning from conflict and humanitarian crises and enabling sustainable long-term growth and development. AA Hess was struck by the conditions of vulnerable urban populations, the victims of organized violence and torture, the acute water shortages in Bulawayo and other urban areas, and the visible need for continued food assistance programs. However, he also became keenly aware of how easily food and any humanitarian assistance can be used as a political tool in such a highly charged environment and called for more rigorous measures to prevent politicization. AA Hess affirmed that USAID programs were doing the right things in the right places, but acknowledged that gaps do exist as increasing numbers of people are in need. Recognizing the need for closer coordination and synergies between humanitarian organizations and civil society organizations, Mr. Hess noted that USAID could play an even greater catalytic role as facilitator of increased dialogue. AA Hess concurred with USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor's plans to continue assessing ways to better address the water and sanitation problems in Bulawayo. This was a tightly scheduled and extremely productive visit. The Mission greatly appreciates the insights, interventions, and energy of Mr. Hess and Ms. Brooks. End Summary.

Hess Impressed by Commitment of Democracy and Governance Partners

¶2. (SBU) AA Hess met with many DG partner organizations during his visit. The Combined Harare Residents Association (CHRA) gave him a

tour of squatter camps where forcibly relocated victims of the GOZ Operation Murambatsvina had settled and are struggling to survive. Key civil society representatives shared ideas and predictions about Zimbabwe's repressive political dynamics and opposition movements. A roundtable discussion with board members from the Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN) assessed the state of readiness for elections, highlighting the significant obstacles to free and fair elections scheduled for March 2008. A second roundtable discussion with some of the country's leading pro-democracy activists from civil society organizations (CSOs) gave AA Hess a taste of the diversity of opinion among CSOs regarding what is the optimal way forward toward transition and the tensions that exist among CSOs themselves and between CSOs and the political opposition.

¶3. (SBU) AA Hess visited the Counseling Services Unit (CSU), a USAID-funded organization that provides medical and psychological care for victims of state-sponsored organized violence and torture. He heard first-hand accounts from opposition and civil society victims about their ordeals and survival strategies. Given the caseload of over 2000 victims already treated this year, it was clear why such a unit is vitally important. He was also briefed on the important work this unit is doing in documenting abuse.

¶4. (SBU) In Bulawayo, representatives from Christian Alliance explained the vital role of churches in the Save Zimbabwe Campaign, which aims to mobilize civil society actors to press for alternatives to current governance systems. AA Hess met with opposition party Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) policy chief Eddie Cross and MDC Shadow-Minister for Environment and Tourism Gertrude Mthombeni to learn the state of play of opposition politics and the ongoing negotiations between ZANU-PF and MDC, brokered by South African President Thabo Mbeki. Finally, AA Hess, during a breakfast meeting with Bulawayo Agenda, heard a reiteration of concerns voiced at both roundtables and during his meeting with the

HARARE 00000903 002 OF 005

MDC about the dangers of manipulation and politicization of food aid. (Comment: It should be noted that Mr. Hess' visit came as SADC negotiations with the ruling party and opposition were at a critical point and as civil society leaders were returning from meetings with the RSA negotiators. The views of opposition and civil society on negotiations were quite different. Mr. Hess encouraged greater dialogue and the establishment of clear benchmarks for the achievement of acceptable outcomes on negotiated points. End Comment.)

¶5. (SBU) AA Hess's interactions with these key USAID democracy and governance program partners produced several important observations, conclusions, and ideas for future action:

-- GOZ sanctioned torture and organized violence is real and debilitating. USAID's funding to CSU meets a critical need, providing humanitarian assistance and bolstering support among those brave enough to challenge the Mugabe regime. However, the CSU program is extremely sensitive, it remains vulnerable to GOZ shutdown, and its employees risk their own personal safety.

-- If institutions are not ready and SADC and international standards are not met, then pressure should be applied by civil society to delay elections to allow proper preparation.

-- USG should encourage civil society organizations (CSOs) to set clear benchmarks, prerequisites, and expectations for free and fair elections. Donors need to support these independent elections-support initiatives.

-- An agreement was apparently reached by ZANU-PF and MDC to allow the creation of an independent electoral commission to monitor the preparation and execution of the presidential and parliamentary elections. As watchdogs, CSOs should carefully monitor the development and work of this electoral commission.

-- Leadership of democratic organizations should keep donors and civil society partners better informed of the MDC and ZANU-PF negotiation process so they can reinforce agreements with diplomacy or programming. Democratic organizations cannot expect support if

they do not communicate needs.

-- Issues important to CSOs are not necessarily the same as those of the political parties. Donors need to view them separately and work to increase the linkages and dialogue among them.

-- Human rights groups and other CSOs have a critical role to play as information sources for food aid NGOs and donors with regard to manipulation and politicization of food aid.

-- AA Hess alerted USAID Mission staff to a DOD civ-mil program that provides financial and logistical support for independent radio broadcasting capacity. The Mission and DCHA will follow up with EUCOM to investigate possible complementary funding for "Studio 7," a USG-funded program in Zimbabwe with Voice of America.

USAID Humanitarian Assistance Keeping Zimbabweans Alive

¶6. (U) AA Hess also focused attention on the humanitarian programs and conditions that make Zimbabwe a complex emergency. USAID's Office of Food for Peace (FFP) partner organizations - UN World Food Program (WFP) and the Consortium for Southern African Food Security Emergency (C-SAFE) - provided a thorough review of the food shortfall, the imminent hungry season, the identification and registration of vulnerable individuals, food distribution mechanisms, and monitoring mechanisms that attempt to limit abuse and politicization of food aid. In addition, he examined the programs funded by USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) such as the Joint Initiative and IOM support for the internally displaced, addressing the needs of urban vulnerable populations, mitigating the effects of drought, and supporting

HARARE 00000903 003 OF 005

livelihoods strategies.

¶7. (SBU) The NGO representatives expressed concern to AA Hess that the media, and often human rights organizations, does not distinguish between GOZ food assistance and international food aid when reporting accusations of politicization. While all partners have faced attempts by local politicians to use their food or distribution sites for political ends, in every instance they say they have successfully dealt with the interference, e.g., by expelling the offending parties, repeating registration exercises, or suspending distributions. They also say they investigated and resolved accusations of politicization that have come to their attention and found that most were unfounded. NGOs did acknowledge that more subtle forms of politicization do take place when their staff is not present, e.g., marginalized community members being discouraged from participation in registrations via intimidation, or politicians taking credit for the NGOs' activities. This year, both C-SAFE and the WFP modified their registration and verification requirements and procedures to increase their ability to limit abuse and politicization of food aid. The C-SAFE partners welcomed information about apparent politicization from other organizations or individuals and offered to share their distribution schedules with others so that they can monitor jointly.

¶8. (U) AA Hess visited a C-SAFE rural school-based feeding site in Chegutu District. In general, the program was operating well. Not only were out-of-school children encouraged to come to eat, but with the school's help many have found financial assistance, enrolled, and now attend. The only observed deficiency was soap. The children washed their hands with water only before eating because soap has not been available on the market for the school to purchase.

¶9. (U) Mr. Hess paid a courtesy call on Bulawayo's Mayor Japhet Ndabeni-Ncube. He was warmly received by the MDC stalwart who is struggling with the economic and humanitarian crisis in Zimbabwe's second largest city of over 1 million people. He spoke of having to divide the city by three and rotate water service. Although situated in a chronically dry region, Bulawayo does have water resources. There are five dams and 77 wells which can service the city's water requirements, but due to lack of maintenance and

investment, only two dams and four wells currently function. Although the Mayor has asked the central government for help, none is forthcoming, except for a struggle by the central Zimbabwe National Water Authority (ZNSWA) to take control over local water works. ZNSWA has mandated lower tariffs "so as not to penalize the poor," but this has stripped the City Council of revenue needed for system maintenance. The Mayor reported, however, that in desperation he has engaged ZNSWA and the local private sector in an agreement to rehabilitate some of the non-functioning boreholes to provide some relief. He also said that UNICEF is putting into place a series of water tanks in strategic locations, such as schools, and will be tankering water. In the longer term, Bulawayo is 60 km from the West Mlombo aquifer, where a reservoir was constructed in 1996. If a pipeline were constructed to link the reservoir to the existing dams, the water situation could be vastly improved. Health is now a major concern with poor quality water and lack of sanitation. Basic medicines are supplied by the central government and stocks are low to non-existent. The Mayor also commented that their stocks of MOH controlled ARVs are declining and that although they are not adding new patients to the rolls they are in danger of a stock out.

¶10. (U) Comment: In many ways, Bulawayo is a severe case of what is occurring throughout Zimbabwe. Most urban areas, including Harare, are drying out, with whole segments going without water for weeks on end. Electricity is severely rationed and basic commodities and gasoline unavailable, leaving stores empty or closed. The black market is the norm for most purchases. Zimbabwe receives 30 percent of its basic drugs from donors, leaving the other 70 percent uncovered. End Comment.

¶11. (U) In a poor suburb of Bulawayo, Mr. Hess visited millers and retail shops that grind and sell subsidized sorghum as part of the

HARARE 00000903 004 OF 005

USAID-supported C-SAFE Market Assistance Program (MAP). This program seeks to ensure a constant supply of this low-cost staple food for the urban poor. However, currently, as the program struggles to adapt to the dynamic economic conditions, e.g., price control induced shortages of all staple foods, MAP is not able to keep up with demand to achieve its objective. At the shops visited, shelves were empty or being filled with sorghum for the first time in weeks. Long lines were forming and shop owners reported that the day's delivery would be gone within the hour. Nevertheless, the concept still appears to be one of the best ways to reach the urban poor in Zimbabwe, and programs like MAP should be expanded and replicated to other urban and rural areas, particularly Harare.

¶12. (U) In Bulawayo, Mr. Hess also visited beneficiaries of the Joint Initiative, an innovative multi-donor, multi-NGO program funded by USAID/OFDA that supports cottage industries such as soap making and brick making, as livelihoods for urban vulnerable populations. The groups reported great success finding customers and selling their products, except that in the current difficult economic situation they have difficulty accessing raw materials, and this has severely reduced their output. Comment: The water shortage was acutely obvious in these suburbs. Water is being rationed throughout Bulawayo as is electricity. Stores are empty and unemployment high. Residents have been instructed not to water their kitchen gardens and so, at the same time as their income is limited, their coping mechanism is wilting before their eyes. End comment.

¶13. (U) Several key observations and outcomes emerged from AA Hess's interactions with representatives of humanitarian organizations and beneficiary populations.

-- When NGO staff complained that WFP registration for food distributions is time consuming, AA Hess became concerned that operations may be proceeding too slowly to meet the emerging demand and distribution timetables. More information is needed from WFP to evaluate the pace and estimated completion date. C-SAFE began registrations earlier, employing a process that is less time consuming and will complete all registrations in mid-October.

-- In a roundtable discussion, USAID partners expressed frustration about implementing food-for-assets projects in affected communities

and households that would significantly improve household livelihoods. They lack adequate funding for essential non-food materials (e.g., tools, cement or fencing) to support repair or construction of assets of sufficient scale and quality.

-- Neither WFP nor C-SAFE produce maps to show the specific locations of their various activities. Both display information only at the district level. Such maps would visually demonstrate the extent and coverage of food assistance. C-SAFE's budgets have included mapping software licenses and GPS instruments to enable them to produce detailed maps, but they lack the technical capacity to use these tools. Recently, they engaged a consultant to produce the maps. Likewise, WFP agreed that the mapping would be useful but they too lack the technical capacity. Both agreed that technical hurdles could be overcome and committed to producing maps before the end of September.

-- USAID/Zimbabwe Humanitarian Assistance and Democracy and Governance offices will facilitate communication between their partners about attempts to politicize food aid and to exchange information about vulnerable groups and individuals in need of food assistance.

-- Bulawayo's chronic water shortage is reaching acute levels as the dry season continues. New program interventions should be considered that would build on existing and low-tech water procurement and storage mechanisms such as borehole rehabilitation and roof catchment and storage systems.

-- The onset of the rainy season in November could make things even worse, as pollutants and sanitation problems spread through poorly

HARARE 00000903 005 OF 005

maintained pipes and sewerage systems. USAID/OFDA's recent grant to Oxfam for water and sanitation interventions in Bulawayo and other urban areas may help.

-- The NGO Joint Initiative consortium partners support a livelihoods program in Bulawayo that makes soap, which will increase the availability of this now scarce, but essential, commodity. Local production has been limited because of the unavailability of raw materials, especially tallow. USAID/OFDA will work with the Joint Initiative and private companies to explore ways to increase local soap production. Oxfam has just received USAID/OFDA funding to procure and distribute soap in key urban areas in Zimbabwe. It is hoped this simple, preventative program intervention will reduce the spread of disease by enabling proper hygiene.

-- USAID/OFDA Senior Regional Advisor will return to Zimbabwe in October to continue working with partners to identify ways to meet rapidly growing needs, especially in the water and sanitation sector.

USAID Doing Right Programs in Right Areas, but the Gaps
are Growing

¶14. (U) Based on his observations and analysis in Zimbabwe, AA Hess affirmed that USAID is implementing the right programs in the right areas to meet the most critical needs. Key institutions of democracy and human rights are being supported, and many of the most vulnerable populations are receiving life-sustaining humanitarian assistance. However, significant and growing gaps were identified. Despite programs by USAID and other donors, the needs of vulnerable populations in urban areas are not being sufficiently met. Even in these highly politicized environments, greater attention should be focused on identifying and assisting those individuals and communities that are falling through the cracks of existing, but badly overstretched, humanitarian programs. Partner capacity and resource issues are serious constraints, but access restrictions by the GOZ are also contributing to these gaps in services. AA Hess encouraged the Mission to examine further areas of need, and he pledged to highlight Zimbabwean issues and seek further support in Washington. AA Hess witnessed the important supportive role played by USAID in encouraging the promotion of democracy and good

governance in Zimbabwe. There is a need for USAID to expand its role as facilitator and catalyst between different groups in civil society, bringing civil society organizations into more strategic and operational engagement with humanitarian organizations.

115. (U) This cable was cleared by AA Hess.

DHANANI